

St. Peter's Press

September 2023

St. Peter's Presbyterian Church - Spencertown, NY

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HAPPY 20TH ANNIVERSARY AS ST. PETER'S MUSIC DIRECTOR! THANK YOU, LUKE OLIVIER!!!!



Luke Olivieri first came to St. Peter's in September 2003 and has led us in making music ever since.

In addition to guiding the choir, Luke's piano-playing prowess greatly enhances our worship experience at St. Peter's.

Martin Luther said, Beautiful music is the art of the prophets that can calm the

agitations of the soul; it is one of the most magnificent and delightful presents God has given us. We are lucky to have Luke and the choir to calm our souls, lift our spirits, and delight us.

Luke grew up in Boston. At the age of 8, he took organ lessons and enjoyed that, but his love of music really took off when he attended the Noble and Greenough School by the Charles River in Dedham, MA. There he wrote music for school plays and also for fellow students. In high school, he was in a rock band playing keyboard and singing. They not only had gigs at the school but also in the town of Dedham — quite a success!

Luke attended Northwestern University in Chicago where he majored in music, specializing in

composition and piano performance. After that, he moved to Brooklyn, NY, where he lived for 4 years. In Brooklyn, his beloved daughter Simone was born. Upon leaving Brooklyn, he moved to the Berkshires to raise Simone (who is now 33). He found that there is great music in this area.

Luke has shared his talents with students, teaching at prestigious private schools, including: Wilbraham & Monson Academy in Wilbraham, MA, and Marvelwood School in Kent, CT.

For the past 12 years, Luke has taught piano and guitar to private students. He seriously taught himself to play the guitar 12 years ago so that he could include that in his lessons and because he was interested in folk rock music.

Luke really appreciates the latitude he has had at St. Peter's in choosing music, which runs the gamut from classical to religious to contemporary. He likes music that he considers is "food for the spirit."

Luke and his collaborator, John Segalla, are currently working on an original musical about the Boston Tea Party.

Funny Story: Luke borrowed his daughter's keyboard to use at St. Peter's one day. After using it, he put it in a closet in the basement. Much to his dismay, it disappeared; seems it was inadvertently put in the Trash and Treasure sale and purchased. Later, Rev. Don Mairs asked Luke if he could give him some lessons playing keyboard. When they got together for the lesson, lo and behold, Rev. Mairs showed up with Simone's keyboard, which he had bought at the Trash and Treasure Sale.

Come to church on Sunday, September 10, for a Potluck and Celebration of Luke's 20th Anniversary at St. Peter's.

Beloved Doris Jean Stalker -ADynamic Presence at St. Peter's

Spencertown has lost one of its greats. Doris Jean and the other strong women of Spencertown were the heart of the community and church and kept them alive. A few of the things that come to mind when I think of DJ—her big smile, alert eyes, her



spirit, her big presence, boundless energy, her convictions, humor, laughter, and love. (Written by Irene Young on the funeral home Tribute Wall)

Doris Jean (DJ) McComb Stalker passed away on August 23 at the age of 88. She will be sorely missed by

those of us at St. Peter's.

She was the daughter of the late Robert and Doris (Whiffen) Mc Comb. She graduated from Ockawamick High School in 1954 and, after that, from the Albany School of Business. She married her beloved husband Matt Stalker February 2, 1957. If you want an example of someone who was "active" in the church, she is that person! And she urged others to do the same. (There will be more on her work at St. Peter's later.) DJ loved flowers; sitting by the fire; watching the birds and wildlife; and spending time with her grandchildren, great grandchildren, extended family, and many friends.

An Appreciation of Doris Jean by her friend Barbara Smith

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Barbara Smith spoke at the memorial service for Doris Jean at the request of the family to recognize to share some of her many good works on behalf of St. Peter's Church. The following is her talk:

"To prepare, I spoke with several members of the congregation to make sure I had captured important stories. Also, after yesterday's Sunday service, St. Peter's current minister, Rev. Donna Elia, and Rev. Beth Illingworth, who also serves the congregation, added some suggestions.

"At yesterday's service, Rev. Elia called Doris Jean 'somewhat of an icon at St. Peter's — respected, loved, and tough as nails.' She reported a comment that Doris Jean had made to Rev. Illingworth: 'St. Peter's was her church; she didn't care if it was Christian, Buddhist, or Hindu, this was her church!' Born and raised in Spencertown, Doris Jean was a lifelong member at St. Peter's.

"After raising their family in Connecticut, Doris Jean and Matt returned to live full time in Spencertown in 1994. Doris returned to Wallingford in the fall of 2017 to be closer to her family.

"My remarks focus on activities and events in those later years of Doris Jean's life.

"Doris Jean was a pillar in St. Peter's church since her return. Most prominently, she served as the Clerk of Session, which is the governing board of a local Presbyterian church, during the tenures of four ministers (George MacDonald, Don Mairs, Doug Holmes, and Drew Paton). A Clerk of Session has administrative responsibility for important recordkeeping of decisions made by the church committees; tallying births, deaths, and new members; and periodically reporting budget and audit information to the Presbytery in Albany.

"We can surmise from her long tenure that not only did she enjoy the role of Clerk, she also excelled at it. As Rev. Illingworth noted, Doris Jean served as Clerk during a pivotal time for St. Peter's. She was both open-minded and had to do things properly, and she was known in the Presbytery for knowing the rules and upholding them. Having Doris Jean as a figure of continuity with transitioning ministers benefited the congregation and the ministers. After her departure about 5 years ago, Doris Jean always made herself available to be a resource for the new people serving as Clerk.

"About 20 years ago, a group of town residents and church members formed a not-for-profit corporation, called the Friends of Historic St. Peter's Church, Inc., to raise funds and oversee the restoration of this historic building. The project was a transformative one for the Church, and Doris Jean served as a board member of the organization for several years. A few years into the project, it became apparent that the steeple was in more serious condition than anticipated, and the additional repair costs would be considerable. Wearing the hats both as Clerk of Session and Friends Board Member, Doris Jean helped seek a mortgage from the Presbytery to pay for the additional costs. The Friends organization agreed to raise money to pay off the mortgage debt. Who can forget the sight of the church's steeple being removed and hanging in midair?

"In addition to the business of her role as Clerk, Doris Jean was a vital force in organizing many of St Peter's community events. I'm sure that many of you sitting in this church today have enjoyed dining at the annual corned beef dinners, which were favorite events for Doris Jean to organize. Who can forget how she'd man the dessert table and chat to all who were dining about the selections available?

"What was particularly admirable about Doris Jean was that if she said she would get things done, she did. She encouraged, cajoled, and supported the many volunteers to cook, serve, count money, and clean up after numerous events. She made sure that the *Summer in Spencertown* fundraiser held to benefit the Friends of St. Peters' was planned, advertised, and staffed. Finally, she helped coordinate several *Trash and Treasure* events, which were poplar fundraisers held for several years. In fact, my last conversation with Doris Jean had to do with how to organize another such event.

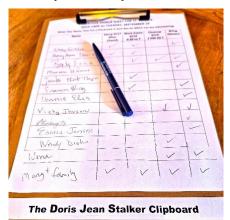
"Doris Jean usually sat in the back pew, where she 'held court' with friends and other churchgoers. Rev. Illingworth wanted me to say that Doris Jean was devastated by the accidental death of her dear husband, Matt, in 2011; but that we should take consolation knowing that she is with him now.

"I came to know Doris Jean through volunteering at events here and serving as a Friends Board Member. I am happy to have called her a friend of mine, and I hope I have honored her with these remarks today. I will miss her straight-talking and humorous outlook, not to mention her vibrant fashion style; I expect you will too."

A memorial service was held at St. Peter's on Monday, August 28, followed by interment in the Spencertown Cemetery. A reception was held in the Fellowship Hall organized by the Board of Deacons and Council.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be sent to the Friends of St. Peter's Presbyterian Church or the Hospital of Central Connecticut at Midstate Medical Center, 435 Lewis Ave, Ste 220, Meriden CT 06451, Attn: Cancer Center.

Condolences may be conveyed at frenchblasl.com.



The church received the following thank-you email:

Thank you for the use of the church for funeral services for Doris Stalker and the reception that followed. Also, thank you to those who helped out at the service with seating, etc. St. Peter's church was an important part of her life. Sincerelu.

Tim Stalker on behalf of the family



Front row from left: Mitzi Lobdell and Judy Harrison (DJ's sister); from left, standing, Suzette Booy, Tim Stalker, Carol Ann McComb, and Maria Ostrander



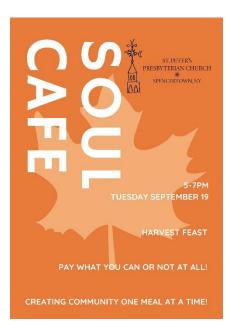
Friends and family members who attended the reception in the Fellowship Hall.



The food table. Pictured from left are Mitzi Lobdell, Marcy Coalter, Kathy Geddie, and Jere Wrightsman.

Soul Café Coming September 19

St. Peter's second Soul Café is coming on Tuesday,



September 19, from 5 to 7 PM! Spread the word!

We are thrilled to provide an opportunity for friends, new and old, to pay what you can (or not at all) as we offer delicious meals to those seeking community and/or experiencing food insecurity.

The first St.

Peter's Soul Café was a BIG HIT! We had 56 people, with more than half of them not affiliated with St. Peter's. The atmosphere at the dinner was festive, with lively conversations at all the tables.

The menu will be a *Harvest Buffet* featuring locally grown produce. It includes smoked salmon, chicken-vegetable soup, roasted veggies, mac & cheese, potatoes au gratin, kale salad, and bread.

We need our wonderful St. Peter's **bakers to bring desserts** to complete the meal. Plus, we need helpers for working the event and cleaning up afterward. There is a signup sheet at church.

Clara Gott Fund: Grant Application Deadline Date

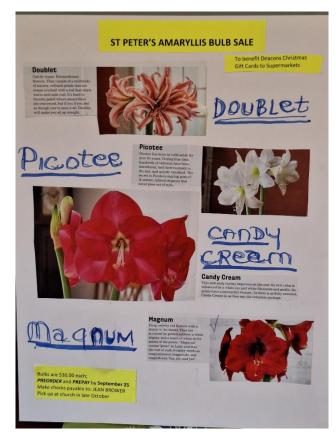
The next deadline for submitting applications to the Clara Gott Fund is **September 15**, **2023**.

Applications are available at all times on the church bulletin board in the narthex and via a link on the St. Peter's on the website:

https://saintpeterspc.org/clara-gott-fund/.

If anyone knows of an organization or an individual who could use support from the fund, please inform them about Clara Gott. Grant seekers may submit an application once per calendar year.

Jean Brower Will Procure a Magnificent Amaryllis for You — Get Your Order in Now!



The poster above shows the varieties of amaryllis you can order – maybe get two or three!

Proceeds from the bulb sales go to the deacons to help fund the purchase of supermarket gift cards for Christmas for those in need of a little extra help during the holidays — another way St. Peter's reaches out to the community.

Order forms are in the narthex on bright yellow paper. The bulbs are \$30 each (if you've ever seen the blooms of the flowers, you know that's a bargain!). **Orders and payment are due by September 25.** Make checks payable to Jean Brower.

Rev. Donna Elia can be contacted anytime. You can call her on her cell phone (518-495-6795) or on the church phone (518-392-3386).

Healthy Snacks for Kids



School is in session! We pray for a successful year for our kids and teachers. One thing we can do to help is provide healthy snacks for:

- Sandy's Food Pantry (that is our Sandy Fischer who keeps snacks on hand, which she purchases, for her students), and
- The free Morris Memorial Afterschool Program snack supply.

There is a box in the narthex to collect your contributions for our community's children.

Some suggested items to donate are fruit cups, juice drinks, fruit leather, protein bars, trail mix, applesauce cups, granola bars, and the like. Many children in our area need a little help getting the food they need to thrive.

Women Unabridged



Women Unabridged will meet Monday, September 18, at Mary Anne Davis's home for a potluck at 6:30 PM. The book is **Demon Copperhead:** A

Novel by Barbara Kingsolver, one of our favorite authors. Considered one of the best novels of 2022, "this book is equal parts hilarious and heartbreaking. It is the story of an irrepressible boy nobody wants, but readers will love." (Ron Charles, *Washington Post*)

Kingsolver, inspired by Dickens' *David Copperfield*, takes Demon Copperhead's adventures along the same path — two parallel lives, 174 years apart. *David Copperfield* was a timely social commentary about the inequity of class, women's opportunities, education, and access to health care. Similarly, Demon is a voice for Appalachia. You don't need to read Dickens' novel to fully appreciate this one.

The book group always welcomes new participants. For questions, contact Denise Davis, 518-392-9690, or Teresa Barensfeld, 518-755-3273.

Peacemaker from Liberia to Speak at St. Peter's September 16



Don't forget to come to church on **Saturday**, **September 16 at noon.** St. Peter's, in collaboration with the Valatie and Hudson Presbyterian Churches, will

host International Liberian Peacemaker *Matilda Parker*, *pictured above*. She is a ruling elder at the First Presbyterian Church in Monrovia, Liberia. **Lunch will be provided** — just come and share in an inspiring time! SPREAD THE WORD! *For a complete article on this event, see the August newsletter, which also includes a brief history of Liberia.*



Come on over to St. Peter's from 10 AM to 2 PM this Saturday, September 9 for Cleanup Day! There will be bagels! And Marcy's Cold Tea!

There is much we can do, including cleaning the kitchen, wiping the pews, cleaning the windowsills, straightening the closets, weeding outside, and more. The more people who come, the faster we can *get 'er done*. Cleaning supplies will be furnished. Let's all roll up our sleeves and brighten up our beautiful church. *Many hands make light work!*



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Blessing of the Animals: On Wednesday, **October 4** (the feast of St. Francis), at **5 PM**, St. Peter's will have a brief service of blessing the animals outside on the green. Please bring your dog, cat, lizard, rabbit, turtle, etc. If you are more comfortable bringing a photo and/or want to bring a photo of a deceased pet, you are welcome to do so as well. This service is open to anyone, so invite your friends and their pets.

In case of inclement weather, we will hold the service in the church.

September Worship-Sundays at 10 AM

(In-person and via Zoom)

3rd: Rev. Elia Communion **10th:** Rev. Elia

Homecoming Sunday, Potluck, Luke's 20th

Anniversary

17th: Rev. Kathi Jones

24th: Lay Leader Jeff Kiplinger



God's World

By Edna St. Vincent Millay

O world, I cannot hold thee close enough! Thy winds, thy wide grey skies! Thy mists, that roll and rise!

Thy woods, this autumn day, that ache and sag And all but cry with color! That gaunt crag To crush! To lift the lean of that black bluff! World, World, I cannot get thee close enough! Long have I known a glory in it all,

But never knew I this; Here such a passion is As stretcheth me apart,—Lord, I do fear Thou'st made the world too beautiful this year; My soul is all but out of me,—let fall

No burning leaf; prithee, let no bird call.

September Lectionary Readings

3rd: Exodus 3:1-15 Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26, 45b Romans 12:9-21 Matthew 16:21-28

10th: Exodus 12:1-14 Psalm 149 Romans 13:8-14 Matthew 18:15-



17th: Exodus 14:19-31 Psalm 114 Romans 14:1-12 Matthew 18:21-35

24th: Exodus 16:2-15 Psalm 105:1-6, 37-45 Philippians 1:21-30 Matthew 20:1-16



Get to Know Your Current St. Peter's Choir



From Left: Music Director Luke Oliveri, Tenor Jeff Kiplinger, Bass John Lange, Soprano Nona Lange, Soprano Kaarin Lemstrom-Sheedy, Soprano Kathy Geddie, Alto Mary Anne Davis, Soprano and alternate Choir Leader/Pianist Shirley Newsome, Alto Sandy Fischer, and cheerleader Rev. Donna Elia (Photo by Marian Eaton)

We are blessed at St. Peter's to have a dedicated choir; it is a rarity in our area. I don't know how far back the choir goes, but I do know it's been here since I started attending this wonderful church in 1990. Some of our current choir members have written about being in the choir, their history with music, etc. These sketches are below. There might be a couple more in a future edition of the newsletter. The writeup from John and Nona has a lot of history of the choir, which I find very interesting; perhaps you will too. We remember others who have sung in the choir including Danial Gott (for many years), Kurt Barensfeld, Arlene Lareau, those mentioned in John and Nona's writeup, and many others.

John and Nona Lange: John and I moved to Columbia County in the summer of 1989. Sometime during our first year, we visited St. Peter's on the recommendation of a friend, who said there was a very interesting and dynamic pastor there. At that first service the congregation was dedicating their new hymnals (the blue ones). Pastor Steve Phelps preached a startling sermon for the occasion, asserting that music was dangerous, and can easily be used to sway people towards evil. What is needed to ground it in spiritual truth and righteousness is the *words*. We were hooked on the thought-provoking sermons, and started singing in the choir within a week or two. Our three children grew up in this church, and all three have sung with the choir on occasion, especially for Christmas eve.

When we first joined the choir, we were singing from the loft. Maybe because it is so old, and has been sung in by so many souls, our church is wonderfully resonant, especially from our perch in the loft. Mitzi Lobdell and Valerie and Jean Massimo were singing in the choir when we started. Our first choir director was Uel Wade, an accomplished pianist and teacher. After he left we had the great good fortune to have Michael Clement drawn to us for a while by our commitment to serving gay people who were being decimated by AIDS at the time. He was a very spiritual leader, and voice teacher as well as pianist. He encouraged many of us with our singing, both individually and as a group. We had many good choir directors for much shorter periods of time, including Bonnie Nordoff, Ian Garvie, and Noah Massimo. Each offered unique gifts. And now we have Luke Oliveri, who has given us so much stability over a long and often turbulent time. Through his own passion for composing, Luke has inspired some of us to try some composition of music or words.

We love it that so many church members join us in singing Handel's *Hallelujah Chorus*.

Nona: I grew up in a home where I listened to a lot of classical music, but no one played an instrument. Mom played the harmonica, especially on car trips, to help pass the time, but couldn't carry a tune. Dad sometimes sang hymns enthusiastically. I listened to a lot of folk music, and we children sometimes sang together, but no one sang harmony. As a youngish adult I was in a workshop where participants were invited to do something to express themselves, and two of them sang a lovely duet that made me weep. I loved to sing but felt really shy about it. I was never in a choral class (I'm not sure any of my schools had one), and we didn't attend church, just occasional Quaker meetings. I happily joined folk sing-alongs whenever I could.

When I met John we started singing together, with him often singing beautiful harmonies. We loved singing to our children. When the twins were 2, we felt we needed a spiritual home. We joined a church in Brooklyn and sang in the choir there. I never learned how to create harmony myself, but through singing in a choir I am always singing in the midst of harmony, and I love it! I like the whole variety of music we sing, from gospel to folk to rock to classical — any beautiful words set to beautiful music!

John: My father sang in our Lutheran church's choir for as long as I can remember. I don't recall him singing outside of church, but rarely, if we begged him enough, he would yodel for us! I sang in the youth choir and joined the adult choir when I was 12. I also sang in my high school choir and in several school musicals. All this exposed me to a variety of music, but I listened mostly to popular music.

When I was in graduate school, I bought my first guitar and loved playing it. It has been my musical companion and accompanied me on my songwriting journey. I am sad that because of my shoulder injury I cannot play it as well as I used to. I have been very happy singing with our choir. I like that we challenge ourselves with some difficult classical music both old and modern, from Bach to Morton Lauridsen.

Jeffery Kiplinger: I joined the choir in November of 2018, a year before the pandemic hit. I always wanted to sing with people, but I had no good idea how to do it. When I looked at community choirs in the area, none were very close by, and they mostly seemed to require an audition and the ability to read music. I had little skills and experience. When I found that St. Peter's was one of the few churches in the area with an actual music director, my wife Katy and I showed up one Sunday and I asked Luke if I could join. The audition was pretty simple — I could sing a scale and more or less stay on pitch.

I was always kind of afraid to sing. My first experience singing with other people was at bluegrass jam sessions, which I didn't start doing until nearly age 50. The choir has given me experience, confidence, and (I hope) some better skills. This year I enrolled in a week-long camp at Tanglewood with Berkshire Choral Institute. That was challenging and enriching, and gave me some things to bring back to the choir (wait until the fall!)

One of my personal pandemic projects was trying to arrange an old Grateful Dead piece for the choir. We sang it earlier this year, and it wasn't perfect, but we really enjoyed working on it. Recently, we sang Morten Lauridsen's *Sure on this Shining Night*, a difficult piece for a small choir. It's based on a poem by James Agee, who lived in Hillsdale. We worked very hard on it, and (I think) we nailed it.

Mary Anne Davis: I joined St. Peter's choir the first time I attended a service here. I had been singing in a choir in Brooklyn Heights the year prior and was enthralled to find a Presbyterian church near our new home with a choir! I didn't know how lucky I was (and am!). Singing brought me back to church after several decades away. I love singing the gorgeous hymns and sacred music of the church. So, that was 23 years ago. I took a break from choir as I built my business but came back in the last year or so. I am so glad I did! Some of my favorite music includes *My Shephard Shall Supply My Need*, *Be Thou My Vision*, *Amazing Grace*, *Morning Has Broken*, and so many more! I always feel better after we sing. Whether it is choir practice or church service itself, I find the practice of singing very uplifting. I am moved by the beauty of the music and the poetry of the lyrics.

Kaarin Lemstrom-Sheedy: My husband Bob and I bought our little house in Spencertown as a retreat from the NYC 33 years ago, and moved here full time 24 years ago. From the very earliest days I would hear the chiming of St. Peter's bell on Sundays and often said to Bob, "One day I'm going to GO to that church..." And now, here I finally am! I grew up in a family that loved to sing. Mom could harmonize effortlessly and played the piano by ear. My big sister Linda and I often sang duets at the Market Street Baptist Church (Amesbury, MA). Dad had a pleasant voice and wanted us all to go on the road as *The Singing Lemstroms* (an idea that horrified us all — "NO WAY, Dad!"). My "baby brother" Lars has a deep, rumbling, bass voice that I look forward to hearing every February when he calls to sing me a wacky version of *Happy Birthday*.

Four years ago I was diagnosed with Gerde Disease, also known as Acid Reflux, a condition which, unfortunately, has caused a good deal of damage to my throat, but when I shared this with Luke, he was happy and willing to take me into the choir in spite of this, for which I am so grateful! My voice is far from perfect these days, but I still love to sing, and I feel very welcomed by the lovely members of the St. Peter's Choir, Rev. Donna, and for that matter, the entire congregation. I feel I've found a home — something definitely worth singing about!

Shirley Newsome: I've been a part of at least 19 choirs — singing, directing, and accompanying. I came to St Peter's from the choir at Rhinebeck's Episcopal Church. This was preceded by (in reverse chronological order):

- First Congregational Church in Brunswick, Maine retirement phase
- A Methodist church in Puyallup Washington (35 miles south of Seattle)
- Westminster College School of Music, New Wilmington, Pennsylvania
- Cincinnati [Ohio] Conservatory of Music
- Norman College in Norman Park, Georgia [where she taught voice and singer's diction]
- University of Colorado in Boulder
- Seminary School of Church Music, Louisville, Kentucky [where she met her husband Eliot and earned a Masters of Church Music]

Beth Illingworth and Luke Olivieri were the first people to actually converse with me at St. Peter's at a Tea on the Green Sunday in 2012, the year I started singing in the choir. Along with many others, the choir is providing extraordinary vitality to defining the spirit of this church during an unprecedented time: at times, bringing new understanding of the phrase, "preaching to the choir" when we have been about half of the total attendance.

🎜 Happy Birthday to: 🎜



Leslie Newton	9/2
Sandy Fox	9/3
Timothy Davis	9/4
Jeff Braley	9/6
Willard Ulmer	9/10
Marilee Lobdell	9/22
Larry Massimo	9/22
Nancy Ordman	9/28

Did we forget your birthday?

If you would like to be added to our birthday list, please contact one of our deacons.

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Sunday (Service at 10 AM)	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Autumn is a sec Albert Camus	1	2				
3 Rev. Donna Elia. Communion	4	5	6 Council Meeting 7 PM via Zoom	7	8	9
Rev. Donna Elia Homecoming Sunday – POTLUCK Celebration of Luke Olivieri's 20 th Anniversary at St. Peter's	11	12 Deacons' meeting 7 PM via Zoom	13 Choir Practice 7 PM at church	14	15 Rosh Hashanah (15-17)	16 Noon: Come hear and meet with International Liberian Peacemaker Matilda Parker Lunch will be provided
17 Rev. Kathi Jones	18 Women Unabridged meeting 6:30 PM potluck at Mary Anne Davis's home		20 Choir Practice 7 PM at church	21	22	23 Autumn Equinox First Day of Fall
24 Lay Leader Jeff Kiplinger Yom Kippur (24-25)	25	26	27 Choir Practice 7 PM at church	28	Full Harvest Moon FULL HARVEST MOON FULL HARVEST MOON MARKET MOON	30